

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please **amend claims 1, 2, and 21** as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A shopping assistance method, comprising the following steps carried out by a service system upon receipt of a shopping enquiry from a remote enquirer:

~~—receiving a shopping enquiry from a remote enquirer;~~

[[—]] obtaining the geographic location of the enquiry;

[[—]] attributing an enquirer-independent functional significance to the enquiry location by carrying out a first location-dependent database search using the enquiry geographic location as input;

[[—]] determining a geographical search parameter by using the enquirer-independent functional significance of the enquiry location;

[[—]] finding an answer to the shopping enquiry by carrying out a second location-dependent database search, the second search being carried out by using the geographical search parameter;

~~—controlling the geographical coverage of the search by using the geographical search; and~~

[[—]] returning the search results to the enquirer.

2. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein the geographical search parameter specifies at least one of the following:

[[—]] a particular shopping zone;

[[-]] a predetermined geographic area for the search;

[[-]] a geographic range for the search;

[[-]] one or more geographic foci for the search.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the first location-dependent database search includes checking a database of traders and their locations.

5-15. (Cancelled)

16. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the service system has a database of local traders giving their locations and contact details of their on-line database systems, the second location-dependent search including consulting the database of local traders and then contacting the on-line database systems of the traders determined as being within the geographical coverage set for the search and trading in items at least of the general type relevant to the enquiry.

17-20. (Cancelled)

21. (Currently amended) A shopping-assistance service system, comprising:

[[-]] an input subsystem for receiving a shopping enquiry from a remote enquirer;

[[-]] a location subsystem for determining the geographic location of the enquiry;

[[-]] a first database subsystem for carrying out a first location-dependent search using the enquiry geographic location as input to attribute an enquirer-independent functional significance to the enquiry location;

[[-]] a second database subsystem for carrying out a second location-dependent search to find an answer to the shopping enquiry using the enquirer-independent functional significance to control the geographical coverage of the search; and

[[-]] an output subsystem for directly or indirectly returning the search results to the enquirer.

22. *(Cancelled)*

23. *(Previously presented)* A system according to claim **21**, wherein the first database subsystem comprises a database of traders and their locations.

24-30. *(Cancelled)*

31. *(Currently amended)* A system according to claim **21**, wherein the second database subsystem comprises a database of local traders including their location and contact details of their on-line database systems, the search subsystem being arranged to consult the database of local traders and then contact the on-line database

systems of the traders that are determined as being within the geographical coverage set for the search and trading in items at least of the general type relevant to the enquiry.